

THE VOICE OF THE INFINITE



ANDERSON



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THE VOICE OF THE INFINITE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
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THE VOICE OF THE INFINITE

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my suffering heart rejoice;
This is the message it brings to me:
"I chasten those that are dear to Me."

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my downcast heart rejoice,
Promising rest in the sunshine and song
Beyond the black forest's shadow and wrong.

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my weeping heart rejoice
Over the thought that our fleeting tears
Cleanse the soul pure for the endless years.

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my groping heart rejoice,
Telling me that which we none understand
Is the simple law of the Other Land.

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my fainting heart rejoice
Over the Love that guards our days,
Asking but faith for a little space.

Out of the Infinite comes a Voice
Bidding my doubting heart rejoice;
This is the message it brings to me:
"I chasten those who are dear to Me."

ROSES OF THE DEW

THE delicate veins in the bloom of you,
Little red rose of the morning!
Herald the evening doom of you,
Carry a message of warning:
Petals of velvet glisten and glow,
Decked in dewdrops of crystal and snow;
Petals of velvet wither and die,
When the hot winds run scornfully by.

The horrible scales on the back of you,
Glistening snake in the grasses!
Tell of the slippery knack of you,
Coaxing of heedless lasses:
Glitter and tinsel their souls beguile,
Clammy and cold your touch the while;
Beautiful colors of precious stones
Dazzle their eyes as you crush their bones.

The roses, red roses, are falling, are falling,
Petal by petal so gently,
Covering the serpent, in silence appalling,
Coiled to spring forth, intently—
Little white hands to gather them in;
Swift sharp fangs like the stroke of sin:
Weep for the maidens, tender and true,
Who seek 'mongst its petals the rose of the dew.

REDIVIVUS

POOR heart! Its bright plumes gone, and
 clothed in rags,
It stumbles wearily through the forest black—
Black with the night, and black with charred
 remains
Of devastating fires—whose shadows hide
The ravening wolves, and terrors more un-
 known;
Whose sentinels are fallen in the way,
And on whose throne, usurping, sits the King
Of Desolation.

Poor heart! That thus alone
And twice unguarded comes, what seeks it here,
Choosing its painful path with trembling feet?
Escape from Hate, or penitence from Sin?
Lost Love, or Death, or rehabiliment?
Have pity then, ye clouds that hide the stars,
The guiding stars of hope; ye jostling winds,
Deal kindlier with the waif; O wilderness!
Stretch forth thy might, and all this poor
 heart's foes
Engulf and overwhelm!

Then shall the Dawn
With golden mantle wrap it tenderly,
And on the Morning's chariot bear it far,
The rosy clouds of bliss surrounding them.
So back to its frail mortal house it comes,
Bringing new cheer, and fresher hopefulness,
Sunshine and song.

DEATH OF PHARAOH'S ARMY

Down! Down! Down!

To the sands at the end of the sea,
The East Winds blow from the Voice of God,
And the waters before them flee.

O walls that are built of stone
May save from the wrath of the storm,
But a bulwark of waves is the Voice of God,
And it shields but the just from harm.

O souls of the darkened land,
Ye fight with valor of men,
But the Children of Light have the Voice of
God,
Whose power is beyond your ken.

Down! Down! Down!
To the graves at the end of the sea;
The cause of your fate was the Voice of God,
That never shall cease to be.

PERDITA

FLOWER of my soul! Growest thou here?
Open thy petals when I kiss thee.
The long knives of the wind dost thou not fear?
The roses in Paradise miss thee.

Spirit of the sea-foam! Seest thou not
The face of the hurricane darken at sight of
thee?
To kiss thee the sun hath his duty forgot—
But terrors are black to the left and the right
of thee.

Soul of the lark's song! Dost thou not know
The dread eagle circles smaller and smaller
above thee?
Alone art thou midst the sounds of woe;
Only a heart frail that doth love thee.

Yet dost thou smile up into mine eyes,
Seest thou there the love to protect thee?
Jewels are not all for the skies,
The splendors of all of them—for me—perfect
thee!

THE THIN BLUE LINE

THE thin, blue line that falters not,
Though wavering like a fluttering veil
Beneath the sun so burning hot,
Shall it forget, that ne'er forgot,
The flag whose stars can never pale
Out of that sky whose bend of blue
Is one triumphant arch and grand
Where marches under warriors, who,
Returning from the thin, blue line,
Bring honors for their native land,
And trophies for her Freedom's shrine.

The thin, blue line that fights for right,
That never bends the knee to might,
Has ever since it knew God's light
Fought dark Oppression in his lair,
And routed Wrong from valleys fair,
Sweet Peace and Plenty leaving there.

O God! The thin, blue line is Thine;
The man behind the gun is Thine;
They've left their labors and their kine:
The old, bowed man, the youth, the boy,
Have left the implement and toy:
Because their Father called them then—
O God, the thin, blue line of fighting men!

The thin, blue line that falters not,
Though wavering like the wind-tossed cloud,
Beneath the death-cold sun forgot,
Cries forth its battle-slogan proud,
Nor shivers fearful of its lot.

Let not Ambition on thy dead
Rear palaces of pride to man;
Let not thy blood, for Freedom shed,
Enslave the darker-minded clan;
Shall Nations laud to Heaven high
The man who used thee for their death?
Shall all thy warriors turn and die
At Greed's mere beck, or Emperor's breath?
No, never shall of thee be said:
"The thin, blue line is hired to slay."
The flag that waves above thy head
Has never yet been borne astray;
The honored tomb is wide for thee—
'Tis better thou shouldst die than a foul traitor
be!

The thin, blue line that falters not—
God's vengeance on thy Captains be!
Have they their fathers' wrongs forgot,
To hunt their brothers' liberty?
All men are equal born, those held;
Shall these, the lesser, then in vain
Hold all their fathers made so plain,
And seek the slaver's chains to weld?

God's vengeance on thy Captains be,
If they hold not their murd'rous hands!
The wilder race loves liberty,
Leave then to them their native lands.
Give back, give back, shall be the cry
A million mothers' grief-wrung hearts
Shall ask of ye when none knows why
The thin, blue line the heathen starts
And forces it to give or die.
For know defeat is for the wrong,
Though they who fight may never know,
But go with laughter and with song
Because their Captains tell them so.

WHO COMPLAINETH NOT

THOU sayest naught is left to do,
That someone else hath done all—
Shall stars no more their lamps renew
For that the sun begun all?

Thou sayest themes are worn threadbare,
And ended all invention—
For that the good 's already there
Shall cease the good intention?

Thou sayest underneath the sun
Is nothing new to greet him—
What of the young life just begun
Whose new soul turns to meet him?

Thou sayest, at deep study's end,
Some old Egyptian knew this—
And who art thou who thinkest, friend,
That only thou couldst do this?

Thou sayest: Lord, Thy will survive
On earth as in Thy Heaven—
Then hast thou known the joy to strive
Is life's most blessed leaven.

THE HEART OF A TREE

A GREEN and tender sapling in the sun
Grew sheltered from the North-wind's biting
blast;

Petted and coddled by that gentle one,
It dreamed of shooting upward a tall mast,
O'ertopping all that stalk the oceans vast:
And so its heart grew hard with thought of
pelf;

The days grew into years, and as they passed
They hardened with narrowing rings its soul
of self.

Yea, gnarled and aged, in the o'erwhelming
gloom

Of the great, trackless wood, it waits the end,
Self-centered to the last, still dreaming fame:
The keen ax of the woodsman knells its doom—
When lo! Its pride laid bare beyond amend,
It first does good in sacrificial flame.

BE FREE

STRIKE off the shackles! Let thy Soul
Unfettered roam
Where Love's illumined fields unroll
Round Heaven's dome.

Bind not Her eyes with earthly veil;
Nor make Her reel
With world-red, furious wine's wassail,
To which men kneel.

Where blooms the blood-hued rose of Morn
Near Heaven's gates,
The paths by Angels' feet are worn,
And Beauty waits.

Here, dark the mist hangs bleak and cold
O'er dungeons deep—
Where doth Thy tenement grow old
Within its keep.

Burst then Thy bonds, wrench out the bars,
There waiteth Thee
A palace in the land of stars—
My Soul, be free!

THE BOASTFUL MARINERS

A good ship sailed on a summer sea,
She sailed with her sails all spread,
For the waves were calm o'er the ocean free;
For the winds in the heavens were dead.

And the sailors they sang in a voice of glee,
In a voice of glee sang they:
"What life hath compare
To the seaman's rare,
From the cares of the world he is free!
On the breast of the wave
There are dangers to brave,
But there are none there to say him nay!"

Now the sun grew small and his beams grew
fierce
Till they twisted the white deck fair,
But never did breath the dull air pierce,
The sun waned red and bare.

What ho! There watchman! O man at the
wheel!
And sleepest thou at thy post?
And feelest thou not thy good ship reel,
O thou with thy wanton boast!

In their cups last night thy comrades sang,
 They sang in a voice of glee:
"O what life so brave
As the life of the wave!
We never shall know but a pearl-lined grave;
 From cares we are free,
 No land lubbers we,
From the foam of the billow we sprang!"

The man at the wheel now rubbed his eyes,
With his knuckles hard rubbed he,
But league after league as the black crow flies
Was never a wave of the sea!

The dry sands with carcasses white were
 strewn;
And ships that long since had gone down,
Gleamed in the new sun like statues hewn
In gold marble from foot to crown.

O a boastful song the Captain sang,
And the sailors in their glee:
"At the fetters of earth
We laugh in our mirth,
From the skulls in the ground they sprang;
 O'er the billows we go,
 Through their crests of snow,
From the cares of the world we are free!

Even as they sang the voice of their God
Spake forth to the waves of the sea:
For even a wave is an earthen clod,
So willeth the Lord to be.

Full three-score days the good ship lay
On her side in the waterless sea,
And never a breeze there came that way,
And never a night might be!

A sorrowful song the Captain sang,
 With his sailors he sang in sorrow:
"O Lord, we are naught,
From the dust we are wrought,
From the seed of the serpent we sprang;
 O God! We pray
 Forgive us this day,
Give us water to sail on the morrow!"

O watchman, ho! O man at the wheel!
And sleepest thou at thy post?
And feelest thou not thy good ship reel?
O thou with thy wanton boast!

Their God in His pity the sailors saw,
And He gave them back their sea:
O both in the desert and ocean is law,
From his Maker no man is free!

Now a song of praise the Captain sang,
 With his sailors sang in glee:
"O God of the wave!
Thou art mighty to save,
And man to his vanity is always slave;
 O none shall be free
 Except in Thee,
Though from the wild waters they sprang!"

THE ROCK

O I AM the rock, the self-same rock,
The rock with the self-same heart,
That centuries sat on the heaven's rim
Afar above where the white clouds swim,
Guarding the ways of the wind-blown flock
From the wolves and the butchers' mart.

The blood of a wounded eagle crept
Into my fissured soul one night,
And I from my lofty height was swept
By the rending frost in my pride of might—
But I yet am the rock, the self-same rock,
That stood by the way of the wayward flock.

O I am the rock, the self-same rock,
The rock with the self-same heart:
Though men have hewn me a corner-stone
For a tower that upholds a Cross alone,
That some may worship and some may mock,
My strength is unmarred by art.

IN THE WEST

AN old man bending in the West
Above a censer, heaven-blest,
That swings by slender, golden cords
Across the cloud-sea's ragged fjords.

A black ship with a broken mast
Upon a black rock breaking fast,
The censer sinking to the sea,
The old man dropping on his knee.

Beneath great caldrons embers red,
And billowing clouds of smoke o'erhead,
The old man fallen on his face,
Asleep in Twilight's camping-place.

Great crimson tents, dark avenues,
And vessels emptied of their crews,
The old man dreaming of the feast,
And Youth's awakening in the East.

THE FALL OF KHARTOUM

AGAINST fearful odds,
And the call of their gods,
We hurled back the enemy.
Unswerved by our fears,
Back upon their spears,
We pushed the black enemy.

But God, it was fearful!
Mad weeping and tearful—
And the shouts of the enemy!
O'er stiff comrades stumbling,
And to ourselves mumbling,
And the shouts of the enemy.

The whites of their eyes
They rolled to the skies;
So close was the enemy.
They hooted and leered,
And false victims speared;
So cruel was the enemy.

A black sea appalling,
Waves rising and falling,
The heads of the enemy.
It bursts through our barriers,
O'er women and warriors,
O'er soldiers and carriers;
Hear the shouts of the enemy!

Against fearful odds,
In the face of their gods,
We fell 'fore the enemy.
For our blood we were priced
To the Infidel Christ—
The Christ of the enemy.

Farewell! I am seeing,
Pursuing the fleeing,
The hordes of the enemy.
Soon, the dust biting,
I'll cease from the fighting—
Pitted by the enemy.

Ye who live after
Cease once in your laughter,
Avenge us on the enemy.
Against fearful odds,
And the call of their gods,
We fell 'fore the enemy.

OMNIA VINCET AMOR

UPON the jagged cobblestones he lay—
Youth beautiful, and fair as dawning day:
His cheeks with pallid roses o'er were strewn;
His lips were set as if by sculptor hewn;
Pain's slumber deep had drawn his eyelids
down;

All matted clung his locks of golden brown—
Thus was he found beneath the wing of Death,
Who, ere that Pity sighed, had sucked his
breath.

But as the people wept and cried aloud,
A Form in White moved through the surging
crowd;

Who came and knelt down at the fair youth's
side,

And queried them how came it that he died.

Then one spake up and said 'twas Error gay
Had slain the youth while teaching him to slay.

"Now Death shall loose his bonds if I but find
One seed of Love within his soul enshrined,
For from this seed—see to it that ye sow—
Doth spring repentance, doth obedience grow,
Which form the Tree of Life for man below."

As thus He spake, before their wondering
eyes

He bade the youth before them all arise—
But ere the boy, bewildered, stood as fair
As ever time before had seen him there,
The multitude forgot the One in White,
Nor knew they when He vanished from their
sight.

NAPOLÉON'S GREETING TO
ST. HELENA

THY cold, black rocks are rooted in the sea;
Thou art a prisoner from the world afar;
Exiled upon this liquid treachery;
Held by the raging tempest's bolt and bar.

Bound by the chains of distance, thou dost lie
Far from the malice of the wily world;
Far from the vaunting step, the velvet eye—
Thou art from envy's blast securely furled.

Strength hath thy loneliness, thy deserts
power—

Thou scar upon the fawning ocean fair;
Within thy naked heart no love may flower
To grace thy scornful bosom, bold and bare.

The white throats of the sea may mock thy
woe—

White throats have mocked at misery before—
Yet though they would not they must have it
so:

Aye, all of them shall break upon thy shore.

UNDERNEATH THEM ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS

YE Mountains grand! That guard the fertile
plains.

O ye that peer through mighty Heaven's veil!
Thou on whose head are wisdom's snow-white
hairs!

And thou yet young and wild; with fiery eye;
Untamed and fitful! What answer hear ye,
when

In pride of strength ye ask the mole-hill low:
"What holds ye up, when from our sides the
flood

That wet our skirts sweeps down upon ye?"
Hark!

"Underneath us are the Everlasting Arms."

O mighty Sea! Thou hast imprisoned Earth,
And shackled all her host, O mighty Sea!

Thou knowest all her secrets; at thy tread
Her nations tremble and grow faint with fear:
Thou reachest up to Heaven, and down to
Hell;

Thou traversest every path. What, when
thy pride

Unto the lowly lake within the wood

Shall say: "What power sustaineth thee, thou
weak
And timid one?" Shall not the sea-gull come,
Who feareth not thy wrath, and say to thee:
"Underneath her are the Everlasting Arms."

And thou, great Sun! Thou soul of fair-
haired Day!
Thou Messenger of Time Eternity
Sends forth each morn from Night's black cav-
erns deep;
Thou who wast given and now givest life;
Remember, when the flickering star goes out
Before thy fire, and at thy breath the moon
Grows pale, the Voice thou heardest in the
night:
"Underneath them are the Everlasting Arms."

O Mountains, Sea, and Sun! Ye statured
Kings!
A breath hath made ye and a breath destroys.
Ye are but suckling babes! Ye are but dust!
As frail as any painted butterfly.
And those ye do deride are told of ye:
"Underneath them are the Everlasting Arms."

O BUTTERFLY

(From the Danish)

O BUTTERFLY! As light of heart thou flittest
From bush to bower, from leaf to flower bright,
Beware ere thou take wing from where thou
sittest,
For flight against the light may bring thee
night.

Pride thee not on those glimmering hues that
speak
The beauty that inspires thy summer mirth,
Thine outer dust, so tender, frail, and weak,
Unseen the larvæ hath of equal worth.

O careful use thy spring and summer brief,
Ere the white snows the withered fields o'er-
crust,
Ere thou shalt breathe age with each yellowing
leaf,
And lightly fade into a mouldering dust.

SUPPLICATION

ALL of the lengthening days, O God!
I have seen the Deep
Breathe as a child, and all the world wild
Sobbing itself to sleep.

Thou that swingest the mighty Sun
Like a censer burning,
When Thy labors vast are done,
Laborers all returning,
Worshipping the loved, loved One,
Terrible and yearning—

All of the wonderful years, O God!
I have dreamed of Thee,
Asleep in the night, awake in the light,
Toiling mournfully.

Send not Thy reapers yet awhile,
Leave us pick the flowers;
Ere the sickle's Judas smile,
Laughter fill the hours;
Thus we pray Thee in our guile,
Mindful of Thy powers.

BIRTH OF MAN

THE earth was once a garden spot
Where angels paused to rest
On journeys through the vast;
Sweet flowers grew; but man was not.

There is the burden of yon tree
Lowlaid within the glen
Beyond the haunts of men;
No life but fungi mayst eye see.

Thou art the child of light, I wot.
And yet perhaps earth's night
Hath brought thy soul to light
When earth herself began to rot.

BLACK BERTRAND AND FAIR EUNICE

WHERE yonder monarch of the wood
Stands guard alone, and lorn,
Ere torch and blade his subjects laid,
I at his side was born.

First saw the light that breaks the night
Within a hovel rude,
Though from right royal loins I sprang,
And came of gentle blood.

The self-same moment Heaven drew
My horoscope on high,
Another soul to earthward flew—
Followed by hue and cry.

Followed by hue and cry was she,
The weak and erring mother,
O God have pity on the weak—
Men are most hard who are most meek—
Self-virtue knows no brother.

Strangely spun the wheel of Fate,
The sinister became my mate;
Long since the monarch fell;
And hand in hand we go, and stand,
One of Heaven, and one of Hell.

Interpreter of Heaven's thoughts,
High hope shone in my face;
In that far realm the stars o'erwhelm
I chose my biding place.

Foul demons of the swinish gods
Danced in my brutish soul;
Imagination in me dead—
Save pictures lewd and wassail red—
Had I but known my dole!

To fish the water of the sea,
To birds the limpid air,
To beasts the earth, to man his birth,
And God be everywhere.

.

Fair Eunice walked beside the river,
A maiden pure if maid was ever,
A queen unconscious of her crown,
She ruled through innocence' renown.

She came at morn, she came at even,
As comes and goes the light of heaven,
And O, to me
The world loomed dark, and live things stark,
If her I failed to see.

My breast a Titan courage grew
To wrest some power unknown
From out the high Olympian blue
To make her all my own!

Yet she to me a being was
As sacred as high God;
Around her form I threw no storm,
I worshipped where she trod!

The million-throated forest sang
Her loveliness at dawn;
That loveliness remained to bless
When light of day was gone.

Fair Eunice thus beside the river,
And I, betimes, my heart a-quiver,
Walked peacefully along its brink—
And never evil did I think.

How is it now? I seem to gloat
As basilisk, or devil,
Upon her palpitating throat,
My soul grown black with evil!

Fair Eunice now beside the river
Shall walk no more as wont, forever!
Love brought her to high Heaven's gate,
Lust slew her where the angels wait.

Reel forth into the dawn again
From out the wicked night;
The wine-fumes go, the dregs remain,
So of the wrong and right.

To fish the water of the sea,
To birds the limpid air,
To beasts the earth, to man his birth,
And God be everywhere.

BETWIXT THE NIGHT AND DAY

(*A Sestina*)

I

O, IN that dim and mystic land 'twixt night and
day
Frail memory brings to age the hours of robust
youth,
And for the loveless builds fond booths of tender
flowers;
Here fancy to the orphaned gives a mother's
kiss,
And to the friendless brings the joy of friendship's
love—
O dim, mysterious country of the dawn and
song!

II

The lark has filled its arching sky with rapturous
song
That heralds the approach of some vague,
wondrous day,
A day whose dawning comes with smiles of
those we love;
The new sun fills its bounds with laughing,
golden youth;
The cheeks of night blush red with morning's
ardent kiss,
And all that dim and misty land is wreathed
in flowers!

III

'Tis here the tearless weep above remembrance
flowers,
The cold ear quickens to the heart's forgotten
song,
The dumb lips murmuring speak and leave a
lingering kiss.
Where sleep's voluptuous form stands beckon-
ing to the day,
The day with burden bowed, the day of pleas-
ure's youth,
Like bird in twilight's glow is poised the soul in
love—

IV

Not caring for the storm if in enveloping love
It basks among its dreams in gardens filled of
flowers!
The hopeless drink again from fountains of
their youth,
Then spurn the lowly ground with lilt of vic-
tory's song—
For in that border land between the night and
day
Our deeds of might are done with lightness of a
kiss.

V

The shadows come and go and greet with fleet-
 ing kiss
 Each undiscovered cheek where hides the rose
 of love;
 And they take heart who fear the near, oncom-
 ing day;
 And they take heed who scent the smell of lotus
 flowers!
 O in that twilight land between our tears and
 song,
 Our sweet imaginings rest on the breast of
 youth!

VI

The weak forget they faint; old age recalls but
 youth;
 And she whom most we love gives us her lips to
 kiss;
 Harsh notes of wakening strife are softened
 into song;
 While those we think we hate we know we can
 but love—
 Then from green bower of vines, from bed of
 purple flowers,
 We rise regretfully unto the sterner day.

Betwixt the night and day, when age recalls
but youth,
Then all our thorns are flowers, our fondest
hopes we kiss,
All hate is turned to love, all tears are changed
to song.

LUCY LINGERS AT THE GATE

Lucy was a slender maid,
Of pretty form and feature;
Her hair hung down in one long braid,
She was a youthful creature.
Lucy lingers at the gate,
For whom does Lucy linger?
For handsome swain to draw his rein
And stoop and ring her finger.

Lucy has bright stars for eyes,
And cheeks the hue of roses;
Upon her breast a wee thing lies;
Its life her love discloses.
Lucy lingers at the gate,
For whom does Lucy linger?
For father of her mother love,
His ring upon her finger.

Lucy's hair will be like snow,
Her voice be low and tender,
Her loneliness too frail for woe,
And God His peace will send her.
Lucy lingers at the gate,
For whom does Lucy linger?
For angel white to kiss good-night
The ring upon her finger.

EPITAPH TO A SOLDIER

AND now the rain beats down upon his grave;
The wild beasts snarl and sniff above the
mound;

Aloft the vulture circles round and round;
Deep in the bushes lurks the human knave.

'Twas such a place as this, and such a land,
We laid him whom the Morn proclaimed her
pride,

A soldier battle-scarred and brave and grand,
Who ere the day had wheeled sank low and
died.

Rest to his soul! He wrought the best he
could,

And doing thus had made him truly good.
Peace to his bones! He was a peaceful man,
Though every battle found him in the van;
In midst of evil, yet from evil free—
Let him who reads pray thus he, too, may be.

“SERMONS IN STONES”

BE not too smooth and even, like to the pave
Where shoulder unto shoulder together lie
The square hewn stone, each level with his
brother.

Across their unresisting surfaces,
Sleek as new-frozen ice, the hurrying throng
Rushes, regardless where its feet may stray;
Each soul intent upon its special lust.
See now the cobble, with a spirit new
Broke through its meekness, raise itself above
Its sleeping fellows. No more the way is
smooth,

The roadway clear; now doth the crowd divide
Respecting it, the erstwhile humble stone.
The haughty eye, upheld by stiff-necked pride,
Sees not the lowly form, and straightway falls
To ignominious shame; the bloated glutton,
Rotund with swinish appetite, perceives
Beneath him naught, and rolls him down the
dust;

The sneaking, furtive, death-white face of ill,
Darting its glances o'er prospective prey,
Ignores the stubborn stone that brings it down,
Cursing and fuming evil from its mouth.
And yet the lowly and the upright pass
Unnoticed by; their senses are not clogged
By fierce desire, or pride, or appetite;

They see the danger, and its warning heed ;
They pass on either side and are not harmed.
Thus art thou honored, when from life of ease
And even-laid contentment thou, a stone,
Hardened, obtuse, and dull, doth lift thy head
Above thy fellows.

THE LETTER FROM HOME

A LETTER from home! Quick leaps the heart,
And quivers as flames that laughing dart
From out the camp-fire burning high.
The human circle's argus eye
Each eager hand watches with care,
As from the heap appears despair
Or joy, as names are hardly read
By the pale light now nearly dead.
More wood is piled upon the fire,
And soon a new flame blazes higher;
Each happy man now gathers 'round,
And kneels or sits upon the ground,
Drinking with eyes made big by night
The loving words that greet his sight.
From mother, sweetheart, friend, and wife
Are thoughts they thought; and words of life
And hope and love and peace they send
To cheer the hearts that hardships rend,
Who on the morrow may be laid
Low in a grave by foeman made.

THE SUBMERGED

OF life I've lived the little span
That Fate allots the average man,
But never yet the mist of gray
That veils the face of shining day
Has from my eyesight passed away.

Within the murky gloom I see
The bended figures black there be,
Whose yellow faces grin at me;
Upon their shoulders burdens lie
That they will carry till they die;
Great loads that they might easily throw
If but they willed to have it so—
It seems they rather would have woe.

I have lived long, but longer yet
My father lived this life of fret,
And always thus it was to him—
The bended figures, crouched and dim.

THE SHADOW CAST BEFORE

O DIVER, deep down in the sea,
When comes no more God's breath to thee,
What fancies throng thy numbing mind
Of skies and sun and fields and wind?

O traveler, lost in desert drear,
Whose sands shall be thy lonely bier?
What visions crowd thy parching soul
Of waters cool and shady knoll?

O wayfarer, on the road of life,
When overcome by weary strife,
What angels gather at thy side
To tell of Christ the crucified?

COMPENSATION

THE measuring-worm shall measure thy small
plot;

A crooked tree shall in one corner stand
And leer at thee; gaunt birds shall shun thy
hand;

A loneliness shall be thy endless lot
Such, that were all the universe we wot
Emptied of its bright spheres, and thou alone
Placed in their stead, it would a multitude own,
And be crowded for thee.

Here shalt thou live and rot,
For thou wast greedy of the world's domain;
Thy swift ambition maimed the stalwart son;
Starvation stalked beside thee; armies vast
Obeyed thy slightest wish, till men aghast
Fled to oblivion—and now the dance begun
By thee shall whirl forever through thy brain!

THE RED ARTIST

AN Artist stepped out of the gloom
Into the middle of my room;
Full tall was he and clothed in red
From sole of foot to crown of head;
His face ay turned he away from me,
And never his features did I see;
But I could read upon his back
That his face was cunning, sharp and black—
I read he had a singular grace
That fit him for a fitful place!
I could not move; I was as dead,
Yea, riveted unto my bed.

He drew forth from his mantle red
A roll of canvas, which he spread
Upon the darkness of the wall,
And, like a dead face in its pall,
It shined white 'round the Artist tall;
With swift, deft stroke he limned a face—
O Christ! so fair! And full of grace,
He drew her form within its place.
Forever, ever, I can see
Those deep blue eyes look down on me;
I see her golden tresses fall
Around about the Artist tall
As with his hand of master skill
He made to laugh and cry at will

The dimples sweet that chased about
Her rosy cheeks in revelling rout!
Then oped her ruby lips to smile;
And arrows of light shot down the while
From stars that shone in the eyes above—
Aye, all of her he namèd love.
Ah, such a face divine would move
The ax and block to swear her love;
The hangman's noose would shame to clasp
A throat so white in strangling grasp!

Next, like a spirit's mould, there grew
A wondrous form the Artist drew:
Lithe as the bending willow tree,
With tapering limbs and motion free.
Ah, on that breast could gods forget!
Within those arms all joys were met.
'Tis such a face, 'tis such a form,
That makes man brave hell's fiercest storm;
'Tis such a form, 'tis such a face,
That makes forsworn all duty's grace.

The crimson Artist, swift and fast,
Around her form a spirit cast;
Her arms she stretched forth unto me,
Her eyes all yearning pleadingly.
I burst the bonds that held me wed
Unto the silence of my bed
And rushed headlong with joyful cry—
Hold! Hold! My eyes grew hard and dry,

As, gazing o'er the Artist's head,
I saw his swift strokes strike her dead!
With gasping breath I did behold
Her eyes grow cruel and steely cold;
I saw her yellow fangs drop bane,
Her shrunken lips leer at my pain;
I saw her withered form rot down,
Reeking with sores from foot to crown—
Yet was she once the fairest born,
Who from my breast my heart had torn:
With her it lies unto this day,
And moulds, and rots, and bleeds away.

The Artist, still with back towards me,
Laughed then a laugh of hellish glee,
And all grew black—the town-clock bell
Tolled heavily as down I fell—
And I was alone with the break of day;
Yes, I was alone with the morning gray.

THE PORTRAIT

PITY the man who sees but with the eye;
Thou art to him a painted fabric frail;
But envy him who can thy soul descry
Beneath the lines where art and genius fail:
He sees the living light behind the veil;
He feels a pulsing heart within thy breast;
He hears within thy soul the nightingale
That sings to him of thee from heavens blest.
Love breathes the poet's passion through thy
veins,
And thou to glorious life enkindled art.
Step forth, O Queen! for now thy beauty
reigns;
Of God's great pulsing world thou art a part;
Thy former house thy fragrance still retains,
But thou now dwellest in a living heart.

THE THREE SPIRITS

Out on the turbulent, tossing sea,
O'er the moon-cast path, those spirits three,
That rule the world from the throne of Him,
Came up from the night-heaven's shadowy rim.

Spirit of Life! The days are long,
Nor ever a flower, nor bird of song;
The nights are dismal tombs that hold
Stark food for worms, fond hopes of old.

Spirit of Death! Who harks the fall
Of yon grand monarch, straight and tall,
That in the forest's vasts alone
Thou hurlest down, unsung, unknown.

Spirit of Love! Dost kiss the wave
That whispers sweet, yet digs thy grave?
Ceaseless and endless, pebble and piece,
The rock succumbs; the sands increase.

Can the soul flung out on the kelp-clothed
strand
By the Spirits Three of the Unknown Land
Be aught but a senseless plaything tossed
By the angry sea that their moon-path crossed?

THE PRAIRIE

THE Prairie, O the Prairie,
Where the footsteps, light and airy,
Of the wandering zephyr fairy
Trode so sprightly years ago!
Where her feet, a moment rested,
Some wild flower the imprint crested,
And a fragrance therein nested
That returns my heart aglow—
God hath made it so.

The Prairie, O the Prairie,
In my heart alone dost tarry,
For the ways of mankind vary,
And our children must have bread;
Furled is all thy spreading glory,
With thy roses liv'st in story,
While these plotted fields of worry
They have given us instead—
All thy grasses dead.

The Prairie, O the Prairie,
Thy burrowing folk were wary,
Thy winged folk ay contrary
In the golden days of youth;
I have seen white armies sweep thee,
The fiery sickles reap thee,
The whirling wild winds leap thee,
But thy doom was not their ruth;
'Twas feeble man's, forsooth.

DAUGHTER OF JUDAH

DAUGHTER of Judah, dark-eyed and comely,
Crowned with the mystery of ages art thou ;
Chosen the people of God were thy fathers,
Chosen of love their daughter is now.

Daughter of Judah, gently, yet bravely
Striking for freedom where error is truth ;
Sister to those who were daringly tender,
Even as Judith, and even as Ruth.

Daughter of Judah, sweet-lipped and loving,
Mothers in Israel thy mothers have been ;
Fathomless now in thy soul lies the glory,
Daughter of Judah, even as then.

THE TAJ MAHAL

IN India lies a wondrous bowl—
Of beauty it is called the soul—
Which, when the heavens cloudless bend
And in no horizon seem to end,
Can once be seen by mortal eye,
Its crystal depths hewn from the sky.
'Tis brimmed with waters clear and sweet
That silent sit at the lilies' feet,
And far below the stars and moon
Lie still and pale as those who swoon.
Alone alive where all is sleep,
The fishes play and dance and leap
About one draped in ghostly pall,
The silvered shade of Taj Mahal.

Aye, who was like to the Shah Jehan,
The son of the Caliph, Wonderful One?
And who so beautiful and blest
As the Noor Jehan? God save her rest.
There is no God but God—and He
Was moved by a strangest jealousy—
And He took the one so beautiful,
The Noor Jehan, for His true angel.

As dead for days lay the Shah Jehan,
The Emperor greatest beneath the sun,
Then arose and knew; then rent his clothes,
Fierce tore his hair; but his pitying woes
Again in kindest slumber wound
His riven heart with peace around.

The winter passed, and the Shah Jehan
Was sleeping apart from the flaming sun
When a messenger came, all clad in white
And crowned with a halo of dazzling light,
Who spake in accents soft and low:
"Come follow me, O son of woe!"

They passed to a chamber of diamonds set
In marvellous manner in marble of jet,
And there on a couch as white as the moon
Lay Noor Jehan in wakeless swoon.
"Now kiss her lips, and thou shalt know
What are her dreams, O son of woe!"
The Shah Jehan knelt down and kissed,
With passionate ardor, the lips so whist;
When lo! to his ear a sweet harp played,
And his eye beheld in light arrayed
The vision of an angel's dream
Such as no mortal man may scheme.

The moon swung low in a depthless sky,
The air was still as those that die;

Perfumed of the Arabies, flowers in bloom,
Arose in pride, like the soldier's plume,
From the edges calm of a water-way
That stretched from night to half-born day.
And there at its end—no tongue of man
May ever hope to tell its plan—
Arose and descended a temple grand,
Where worship the warriors of Israfel's band.

Conceive, if thou canst, the ruby's rays
In stratum laid with the new sun's blaze;
The thundercloud's blackness here and there
Mingling with snow from mountain lair;
And over it all, draped beautiful,
The strange, white light of the moon when full.
This the Shah Jehan saw, then reeled and fell;
But after that day he fast grew well.

And thus it was the Taj Mahal,
The tomb of the loveliest of them all,
Was built by the hand of the Shah Jehan,
The son of the Caliph, Wonderful One.
Oh, ye who may see its silvered dome
Arise from the depths of the twilight's gloam,
Know this: 'twas seen by the Shah Jehan
As he knelt and kissed his loved one;
And when that voice answereth, Noor! O Noor!
O think then of those who have gone before,
And offer a prayer to Allah above
For the Shah Jehan and his beautiful love.

THE SEA-DOG OF THE FARALLONES

I, on my rock here all alone,
Out on the Farallone,
Shall I cry to the keels that pass this way,
That plow from the birth to the death of day,
For a mate on the Farallone?

The treacherous, sinister waves bemoan
My fate to the Farallone;
But the gulls must ever wing over the wave,
Or they sink into even a restless grave—
This black rock is all my own.

A terrible tusk is the one I own,
Of the terrible tusks of the Farallone,
That rise in the path of the ships of the sea,
Unmarked in the fog and its mystery;
To all but myself unknown.

Out on the Farallone,
Like God, I am all alone;
My rock is my throne whence I rule the deep;
The fish here swim fast, and the seal never sleep,
When my cry to the night is known.

WHITHER THE OLD FRIENDS

O WHERE are the old friends, the old friends of
yore,
The friends who our youthful infirmities bore;
The old friends, the good friends, the trusted
and true,
Whose worth in our heedlessness never we
knew?

The rose mist of morning has lifted and sped;
The hot glare of noon-day now measures our
tread;
The giants that strode through the dew and
the clouds
Have wasted to pygmies we lose in the crowds.

O give me once more, then, the brave hearts
that were;
O bring back the old friends that memories stir;
For Night is approaching, the shadows grow
long,
And soon we must pass with the home-hurrying
throng.

THE ROSE MYSTERIOUS

BEFORE I was my soul was not. I knew
Nor cruel thorn, nor leaf of tender hue;
Had consciousness of naught, nor bad nor
good;
Nor claimed of God immortal brotherhood.

Like to the rose is life. The seed is sown,
And Nature, with her consort, Time, makes
known
The tender sprout, the thought we call the soul.
When man first opes his eyes on heaven's scroll
What sees he there? The babe not even knows
It lives, the sprout that it shall be a rose.
How sweet oblivious sleep to those that grieve,
Have burdening cares, or children that deceive;
Who toil bowed down to live a noisome plan
Not of their will or leave. Shall then mere man
Sing praises loud because he's waked into
A troublous life? The rose, of hours a few,
Because the tempest weaves it to and fro
And flings its petals to the winds of woe?

So softly, one by one, the petals unfold,
And show the world the beauty that they hold,
Till from the formless bud escapes the soul
Whose fragrance sweet men's anthems, rapt,
extol.

The intricate machinery of birth,
Through which from rest we woke to restless
earth,
Forgotten is; the frost of winter, too;
The glare of summer sun; because we knew
Them not, in fair dress cloaked. But when the
day
Of consciousness arrives, when worms shall
prey
Upon our untried hearts, and ruthless hands
Shall pluck us from our place in pleasant lands,
Then shall we sigh to be as if we had
Not been—unborn; unknown of good or bad.

And theirs, the common lot of everyone:
To wake, to bloom, to wither in the sun;
Each ever seeking for forgetfulness
From memory's aches, existence' dire distress.

Perhaps a rose is plucked by maiden fair
And fondly kissed; or woven in her hair;
Or bathed in tears and whispered of love's ill;
Or pressed in book to linger many days
Some token of a friend's remembered ways.
Again, perhaps the blighting eastern wind
Plucks out her smiles and scatters them at
mind;
Or parched and thin-lipped drouth destroys
with thirst;
Or insect, like a festering care accurst,

Gnaws to her heart and kills both life and hope ;
Or powerful forces, careless of her rights,
Her beauty plucks, her innocence foully
 blights—

But weal or woe, good done or evil made,
Shall she be blamed who ne'er herself arrayed?
Alike, alone, to meet the dust we go,
Whate'er may be our lives, our death is so.

The petal-strewn path, where walk the shades
 of morn,
Is carpeted with corpses, while, new-born,
Arched over it the buds hang bursting low,
Waiting their cruel turn—for life is so.

What though some few so rare that they may
 grace

The Halls of Heaven, the Celestial Place,
Cared for by angels, bedewed in Jordan's
 stream,

Whose days are blessed, each night some happy
 dream—

Aye, even so, these joyful in their lot
Had known no difference, if ne'er begot,
Betwixt their enviable state and the torment
Of all their sleepless brethren earthly bent.

The senile plant, with senses still awake,
Sees now her petals frail their stem forsake;
Sees round her youth and beauty, gay and
strong,

While she decays in lonely days and long;
Sees happiness go dancing round about
With joyous song and loud, hilarious shout,
Recalling to her memory her own youth,
Which ne'er shall come again with joy or ruth.

O, let them sleep who yet the light of day
Have not discerned, and let the waking pay
Their debt to Nature, and return again
Into oblivion, where nor grief nor pain
Can gnaw to them, and let them there remain!

Great God! Thy inscrutable ways we praise;
Thou knowest best, O Ancient of the Days!
But what, O Jah! before Thee was, or Who?
If Thou wert always give us mind to grasp
The portent of it, for we grope and gasp,
Blind moles in darkness and bewilderment,
Who know that we exist, not what was meant.
Is there no end to space? Is there beyond
A Something, endless, endless, to respond?

Aye, little rose, of fleeting hour and day,
To blossom thus, and then to pass away,
Distilled to poison, or to odors sweet,
A tool of hate, or lovers' fond deceit.

O soul of man! Pray that thou findest peace;
From fruitless questionings pitiful surcease;
That the kind darkness of thy flowerless state
Claim thee again, for aye oblivion's mate—
Oblivion, and all our questions known,
These two are one, as God is God, alone.

FAITH

WHEN all the lights go out and the vast dark,
Like a death-wounded, black, ill-omened bird
Shall settle down to never rise again;
When the sweet silvery laughter of the young,
In merry cadence welling from fresh hearts,
Shall cease its song, and the thin wind instead
Sob out the grief of broken-hearted worlds;
When Chaos from his exile long returns
And waves his crooked sceptre as before
There Order was—O then, in that fell hour,
The Soul that can perceive the Rescuer,
Can still the light hold shining in his heart,
Is blessed indeed.

THE WOUND

THE bow was drawn
In careless twilight of a thoughtless day ;
The bolt was shot as you unwitting came
And passed that way.

The scar is there.
The finger tips of love won't rub it out ;
Nor tender kiss ; nor penitential tears
Of archer lout.

The wound is healed ;
To find it now no boasting eye might brag
Did not your heart remember and fling out
Its crimson flag.

HARP O' THE WIND

His nimble fingers delicate
With swift emotion intricate,
The Harpist, Tempest, wilds
Until, enraptured, yields
The forest harp of thousand, thousands strings
The melody that youth victorious sings.

The whispering of the lisping innocent,
The laughter of its new soul's wonderment,
Low as the murmur of the wood,
Rippling the river's placid mood—
Such, when lithe branches dip,
The song is on Tempest's lip.

Wild riot unrestrained!
Passion's elements unchained.
The swaying giants of the forest twist
And bend, dancing through weird Bacchante
 mist,
To snapping strings' harsh thundering—
As if the World were sundering!

Rose-garlanded, 'midst pillars tall,
The harp hangs mute on Heaven's wall,
Its echoes trembling far into the dawn
To where comes Phoebus' chariot rumbling
 on—

Black Tempest's jewelled fingers
Wave farewell where Night lingers.

KING CODRUS

“My comrade, arm thee well, and bind
About thy limbs thine armor kind;
Gird fast thy sword upon thy thigh;
The toughness of thy bullhide try;
Against thy heart now steel thy mind.

“For Athens’ King goes forth to die—
Yet would he fall with the death-dry
Of twice-ten Spartan heraldry;
Go pitted on the hostile spear
That forms a Spartan’s boasted bier:
My comrade, Athens’ blood is dear!

“Apollo’s voice at Delphi rang,
Amid the battle’s deafening clang,
That I or Athens free must die.
And where is there so fair, so rare
A queen as Athens anywhere?

Look yonder, comrade, o’er the brow
Of yon tall mountain Sparta now
Ten thousand spears pours forth into
This valley guarded by us two.

“My comrade, now for Athens kill!
With Spartan blood thy helmet fill
And quaff revenge ere they shall spill
Thy life upon their field of ill.

Ha, now they come! My comrade, ho!
'Tis thus we deal to Athens' foe!
Let them thy strength and valor know,
My comrade, O my comrade, ho!

"Ah, comrade, is it over now?
I feel Death's hand upon my brow;
His chill breath whispers in mine ear,
While spurting up this Spartan spear
My life blood leaps its touch to clear!
Why answerest not? My comrade, ho!
Art dead? My comrade—blow for blow—
Thus died we—men—tell Athens so!"

FAME

O THOU elusive charmer of my soul!
Since first I thrust the petals open part,
And bloomed a flower upon my mother's heart,
Thy face through heaven's high inverted bowl
Has held me bound to win thy kiss, alway!
The Night but wept that Morning's hope
 might dry
Thy tears away; and hope's devouring eye
Ne'er faltered from thy face while yet 'twas
 day!
What might I not have been had I but known
The empty honors that surround thy throne;
Had kindly clouds obscured thy dazzling face,
Behind whose smiles lurks disappointment's
 sneer;
And I had sensed but for a little space
That love alone is life upon this sphere.

LOVE'S SERENADE

(*A Sestina*)

BENEATH this bower green, my loving heart,
With song as soft as lute I breathe my love.
Some sing in rhymes that like the storm-winds
beat;

Some glide with feet whose tread as shadows
fade:

In subtler verse I seek to hide the woe
That eats my soul as worms devour yon rose.

Thy damask cheek is redder than the rose;
Thy breath is scented sweeter than its heart,
O loveliest one! Hast thou ere felt my woe?
Ah, let me die, if by my heart's great love
Our souls could leave all woe behind and fade
Into those realms where no storm-winds beat.

I hear my heart in quickening measure beat;
My cheeks glow red like yonder shame-hued
rose,

Then to the marble of thy brow they fade—
As if a wave of love came from the heart!
There is no room for hate where all is love,
Where all is bliss comes never any woe.

Yet gladly would I suffer all that's woe,
If but I felt thy heart in pulses beat
With the quick motion that is born of love.
Ah, there are cruel thorns upon this rose,
And there are thorns and stings in love; its
 heart
May wither, too, but mine shall never fade.

Before thy face the roseate dawn doth fade;
Where far the lark in rhapsodies of woe
Makes love to Nature, there doth soar my
 heart
Till thy sweet frown doth pierce it: O, I'll beat
This breast in anguish, and this blood-red rose
I'll dye a deeper red, an' thou spurn my love!

Then come, my heart, and dwell with me in love.
We'll bask in arbors green that ne'er shall fade;
Where grows the lily chaste, and amorous rose,
Where all is joy and peace, and naught is woe.
Canst thou not feel, loved one, the welcoming
 beat
That throbs to us from Nature's giant heart?

O good, my heart! When thou dost cease to
 love,
My pulses' beat shall sink, and joy shall fade
To endless woe, and I wither as the rose.

HYMN TO THE SOIL

THE barren rock is clothed by thee;
The water dipped up from the sea
 By the Sun's glistening hands
In turn bedecks thy homely hue
With colors rare as ever grew
 In happiest of lands.

O, mother of the human race!
Bestow on us thy tender grace
 That we may reap and live;
Give forth thy bounty from thy breast
That sturdy sons may call thee blest
 And strength unto thee give!

Not stripped by flood and wind, nor fool
With a short breathing space to rule,
 Not shivering, bleak and bare,
But green and strong and beautiful,
Thy lap with plenty brimming full,
 We fain would see thee fair.

Without thee must we perish all;
Then shall we to thy warning call
 Turn dulléd ears and cold?
Because we know that at the end
Thy love will seek us out and lend
 A covering of thy mould.

LIFE IS BORN OF DEATH

Now all his books are shut and dusty gray;
His meagre light has set in Life's bleak West;
The crucible's o'ercrusted with spent clay;
The spiders weave their webs about their guest;
His thin, transparent fingers, clasped in rest,
No more shall eager delve in mines of lore;
Forgotten is the purpose in his breast,
The sage enshrined shall feel his eyes no more.

Beside him there, beside the empty shell,
Beside the pitcher broken at the well,
Held in the rigid hand, death-chained and mute,
Lies crushed the history of a life toil-spent;
In mighty measures of his silenced lute,
It rises now his lasting monument.

TO DAME NATURE

If thoughts as fine as thine are I could weave
From out the tangled meshes of my brain,
I'd ask of thee to give thy servant leave
To ease his heart of its dead weight of pain,
To let him sever the imprisoning skein
And find a newer end to start again:
Then would I task of this old, worn-out loom
A fabric that thine eyes might walk along
As if it were a flowering field in bloom,
Where joyous sings the lark, heav'n's soul of
 song.
The shuttle flies not swifter than the light
From thy deep eyes leaps through and through
 the woof—
I would I could my love thus put to proof,
And weave their sunbeams in a fabric bright.

THE FOUR ANGELS

THE Four Angels shortly shall loose the Winds
of Wrath;
The Judge of All is robed within the Solemn
Halls;
Ho! Ye of dancing footsteps along your pleasure's path,
Be sure your deafness shall be cured when
Michael calls.

Cowards, Vandals, Ingrates, Bigots, Selfish
Sons of Men,
War ye now together, never shall ye then;
Soon across the Rainbow Bridge in shackles
shall ye troop;
Haughty, proud, and steely souls, so lately
shall ye stoop.

Go to, ye weak and imbecile that glut
The gutters of the old and crumbling world—
The dead more than the living clog the rut—
The groove is rotted out along which once it
whirled.

O, where is Love and Hope and Faith, and
Mercy gently smiling?
Where hide the beauteous Sisters, Truth and
Righteousness?
O, yonder—no, not yonder where the Judge
sits stern in stress,

But farther, farther, farther, where the children
are beguiling
All the golden hours in romping with the One
of Gentleness!

O, ye who steal, and ye who kill, and ye who
break the trusting heart,
Think ye this earth forever shall go on, your
'change and mart?
Fools! Ye have your little hour, short and
lovely, tricked and gay,
And ye'd always dance and drink, think ye,
and ye'd never pay?

Soon the vials shall be emptied, and the waters
shall turn blood;
Remember then the weakness of Abaddon's
brotherhood;
Ye cannot cry for mercy then, for ye've never
understood
Nor ever it was Evil, nor ever it was Good.

THE GAME OF LIFE

I

A SOUL came forth from oblivion's gloom,
And it walked by the banks of the river of
Time;
Ah, the world was fair as the flowers' bloom;
Oh, the waters and birds sang a beautiful
chime.

II

Then out of the waves of the river arose
A figure all black as the raven's wing;
A long feather drooped o'er his dripping
clothes,
And a sharp, cruel sword in his hand did swing.

III

"Oh, soul!" spake he, "thou must play with me
At the game of chess on Life's wonderful board,
Or else shalt thou go where the unborn be,
Go mourning forever thy broken gold-cord!"

IV

The soul looked up, and over that One
A sweet Face of Sorrow 'mid the shadows did
see;
A voice like the murmurs of rivers that run
Spake kindly and softly: "I will be with thee."

V

And then the Grim One from his black mantle
drew
The chess board of Life where so many have
played;
With his shadowy hand he beckoned unto
Where the lists of the tournament stood ar-
rayed.

VI

O, the Grim One was king, and Pleasure was
queen,
With Indolence and Anger and Falsehood and
Pride
And Avarice and Unbelief the officers mean
Who guided the pawns of Doubt to Death's
side.

VII

O, the Soul was king, and Religion was queen,
And the officers were Innocence, Hope, Truth,
and Love,
Who leading kind Peace and Humility between,
All guided Prayer's soldiers to heaven above.

VIII

The soul is not skilled in the terrible game
Where the wager is death 'gainst immortality.
The cock-feather droops o'er the player of
shame;
Ay, a rigorous player is his Black Majesty!

IX

O, the Vices are crowding the Virtues full sore;
The gleam of the victor shines forth from the
eyes

Of the player of Death as he reaches swift o'er
And places dark Falsehood where Truth
wounded lies.

X

The game is lost! By the river's side
The gates of the tomb of oblivion lie;
The Grim One doth leer as he opens full wide
The portals of Death to the one that must die.

XI

The sad, sweet Face of Sorrow is there;
It watcheth the moves of the Soul in the play—
O, if but the Soul loved the Face, pale and fair,
The Grim One, defeated, would vanish away.

XII

The scene is changed! I see where before
Smoked the sulphurs of death and the forked
lightnings played,
A wreath of white flowers that the low bushes
bore
Upon the chess board in their purity arrayed.

XIII

And the Grim One, defeated, hath vanished
away;
The cock-feather lies ragged and torn in the
dust;
Sweet harps of pure gold the bright angels
play—
O, the victory o'er Sin is the joy of the Just.

THE TRIUMPH OF MICHAEL

DEAD tree, that standeth in the plain,
That never shall wear leaf again,
Ere fell the lightning's flaming blade
What lovers whispered 'neath thy shade?

Dead tree, that sitteth there alone
Amidst the desert's sand and stone,
Hast yet a haven in thy breast
Where the tired dove a space may rest?

Dead tree, that lieth prone and still,
Obedient to high Heaven's will,
Hast yet a shelter from Its ire
For those who at thy side expire?

Dead tree, forth from thy mouldering bole
Shall spring a green and living soul,
Whose roots strike deeper than life's loam
To waters of Eternal home!

THE FISH OF PARADISE

LITTLE fish of Paradise!
Wondrous glow your big, round eyes,
In your watery firmament,
In no prison-house up-pent;
Flashing, turning; dashing, churning;
In your joyous merriment.

Little fish of Paradise,
Looking, O, so quaintly wise!
Orange, red, and ocean blue,
Every beauteous rainbow hue;
Lining, streaming; shining, gleaming;
Heaven rarely favored you.

Build your little house of air!
Never was there home more fair:
Diamonds, rubies, glittering shine
From the fabled coral mine;
Flashing, glowing; dashing, showing
All their riches rare and fine.

At the bottom of the sea,
Where the mermaid angels be,
In the mollusk's vaulted dome—
Carved by gentle sprite or gnome—
Mooning, cooing; spooning, wooing;
Little fish that heaven roam!

Little fish of Paradise!
'Neath the languid eastern skies:
Crocus buds and lotus flowers
Scent the dreaming, sleepy hours;
Waving, sighing; craving, dying;
But reflections of your bowers.

HOMO

IN the Council of the Gods,
Met together in their Halls at the centre of the
Universe,
Was decreed a marvelous thing
By affirmative nods,
With no One at odds ;
And about it now I tremble as I sing.

In the caldron of the Suns
All the mixtures that inhabit us, and the earth,
and all about us,
Were thrown in and stirred by Angels—
Since the Angels that are fallen from grace,
For they knew beyond their place—
Then, as if from guns
Inconceivable in power, was shot the nebula
into space,
Whirling, cooling, crackling, as it settled into
place.

Æons upon æons since the Council of the Gods
met—
Are They concerned about us yet?—
Now we see in our brief view
What Those saw in Their mind's eye
When They blended our chemistry ;
How our atoms, all askew,
Would at last resolve into
What our poor imperfect lenses
Throw upon our halting senses.

From the hot and seething, molten, burning,
 fiery liquid,
Cooling gradually through the bitter cold
Of the universal ether—
Till at last we have grown old,
Like a casting in its mold,
Through each grade and stage and age,
Every storm of stars and elemental rage,
Every cataclysm of Fate's fingers on Nature's
 zither;
Till at last we behold,
Or our senses think we do,
What was meant for me and you;
Till eventually forms and animals have
 evolved
All the ages earth revolved—
What was in God's mind when He began,
The animal with a soul, known as Man.

But one thing was not mixed in
The first elements in the caldron of the Suns:
'Twas an attribute of the Gods,
And impossible such odds:
Thus, imperfect was the plan
When the things that were evolving were ready
 for the Man;
Man himself has called its results Sin—
A reasoning soul was too recent for his de-
 velopment to revel in.

So the Gods again in Council met in the Halls
At the centre of the Universe,
And They proclaimed the freedom of the thralls
They had formed out of the chemicals They
 had stirred
In the caldrons of the Suns at the beginning of
 the Word:
To the highest type erect They bestowed
Soul and Reason; thus perfected, Man stepped
 forth
From the birth-pangs of long epochs; thus en-
 dowed,
Bridged the gap between the Ape
And his little lower than the Angels mind and
 shape.

Some far day, then, the perfect will be abso-
 lute,
And of the Gods' imagination we will be rip-
 ened fruit;
We of perfected souls shall stand alone,
Other things and worlds, the chips from our
 statue,
Shall have fallen, passed back, and have gone
Into the caldron of the Suns:
Seeing, we shall see as we please any face
In any multitude, in any place;
Hearing, we shall hear as we will any voice
In any concourse, from lips of any choice;

Distance and Time shall be forgotten,
When Infinity's and Eternity's understanding
 is begotten
In the Beings that the Gods decreed should be
 evolved from chaos
To replace the Angels who the caldrons stirred,
Who rebelled, in the beginning of the Word.

THE CORN

WHEN March has swept the house all clean,
And April washed the windows bright,
Comes gentle May with smiling mien
And lifts me from my cradle light.

Then newly dressed in wide-starched green
With Summer I run hand in hand,
And all the Mothers o'er me lean,
Caress and kiss me, bid me stand!

I sleep beneath tall plumes of gold—
My tender skin is white as milk—
But when the nights grow chill and old,
Good Autumn wraps me warm in silk.

Then when Aurora's brow is cold,
Her breath a shadow of the snow,
My cloak about my breast I fold,
And home with all my brothers go.

And there, with cloaks thrown off, and clad
In dress of yellow, white, or red,
We dance, each merry lass and lad,
Till Famine's shades of night have fled.

HOME SONGS

How sweet are the simple songs!
The songs of our childhood,
That drown in their melody
The birds of the wildwood.

Wherever the wide world through
We're aimlessly roaming,
Those strains, tuned angelically,
Arise from the gloaming.

They carry us back again
To dear, loving faces;
The songs that our mother sang
Time never effaces.

VALHILDA

VALHILDA of the silent North,
To thy deep eyes are drawn my own;
O bid thy seneschal step forth
And call me to thy crystal throne;
For I would feast upon the fear
That mortals know when thou art near.

Valhilda, goddess of the calm,
Aurora's gold waves in thy hair;
The long lost sun 'midst date and palm
Pines to return thy smiles to share—
Raise not thy sceptre, goddess wan,
Lest all turn stone thou frownest on.

Valhilda, in thy bosom cold,
There beats a tender heart and true;
Who win thy favor must be bold,
Nor falter, lest their hours be few:
What seest thou beyond the rim
Of all the still, still Northland dim?

Valhilda, bless these haunted men
That hunt a thing they wot not of;
Nor draw thy mantle closer when
These seek to tell thee of their love—
They saw earth's beauty 'fore thee pale;
They heard grow still the nightingale.

Valhilda, round thee sobs the wind,
The banished children kneel and weep,
The ghostly lands fill with the blind,
O, call the sun from his long sleep!
Unto thy halls lie thousand told
Adorers mummied by the cold.

Valhilda, art thou then of stone?
Thy smiling lips the frozen's dream?
But this we know—we are thine own,
We love thy most delusive beam;
Valhilda, of the silent North—
All mankind at thy beck stand forth.

THE CROOKED LITTLE BOY

THERE'S a crooked little house on the corner of
the block,
And a crooked little tree grows in the yard,
And a crooked little boy always sitting on a
rock
At the bottom of the tree that's in the yard.

He is gazing at a limb; is it gazing back at him
From the branches of the tree that's in the
yard?
Is it laughing at the boy in the suit of corduroy
Sitting on the rock beneath the tree that's in
the yard?

For the crooked little boy never will the joy
enjoy
Shinning up the tree that's in the yard,
For he's crooked as can be and the silver-
beechen tree
Has not paler leaves upon it than the face of
the poor boy within the yard.

O, the crooked little tree and the crooked little
house
Are still standing in the crooked little yard,
But the crooked little boy sits no more with
broken toy,
For he's gone beyond the shadows of the
crooked little tree that's in the yard.

THE FOREST FIRE

TRUMPET the wild heralds of the wood!
Bannerless they urge and forge ahead;
They need no colors to be led
Whom fear drives. These a brotherhood
Of purpose have, as through the night
They fly the forest all alight.

Now roaring giants fling afar
Great torches through the mist of smoke,
As if they know beneath its cloak
Their routed foes retreating are.

And who so sturdy to withstand
That fiery phalanx marching swift
Against the forest's time-tried band,
And Night's black legions? Man has no gift,
Indemnity, nor host, that shall halt
The fury of these fearful ranks,
When, maddened by the wind's assault,
They leap the river's shrivelled banks
And sabre the protected there.

O Desolation! Scarred and bare
Thy blackened bosom lies; and Death
Leans heavy against the Heaven's breadth.

Aye, fiercely their mighty armies rage,
With terror palsy all their foes,
And leave but wrack behind. Yet wage
Vast forces mightier than those
A greater warfare: the soft rain,
Gently persistent and unsubdued,
Comes steadfast on, till, his outposts ta'en,
His fierce flanks turned, and all his rude
And bloody soldiery routed far,
The foe succumbs in blackening char!
The while the soft hands of the rain
Wash fair the faces of the slain
And beckon the fleeing back again.

FREE WILL

THE world rolls on as yesterday it rolled ;
For some meanwhile the parting bell has tolled,
While some have been cast down, and some ex-
tollled ;
Forgotten some, immortal some enrolled.

The sun shines clear as yesterday it shone—
Upon a man that perishes alone,
Above a fearsome army overthrown,
And a victorious legion haughty grown.

There is no change of purpose wrought with
Fate:
Defeat, nor death, nor infamy, nor state,
Nor love, nor life, nor victory, nor hate,
Shall the Almighty's mandates abrogate!

O we are billows rising from the deep!
Who sink to lowest depths, or skyward sweep;
Who rage a space; who sing and laugh and
weep—
Though the sea is bound, its waves have leave
to leap.

THE TORCH-BEARERS

O LITTLE, trembling, furtive band,
Whose banner hangs in Midnight's land,
Ye are descendants of the Night;
For conscience' sake ye fearless stand—
Your sufferings victor more than might.

Nor fire, nor sword, nor aught of blood,
Are weapons of your brotherhood;
The patience of the saints ye wield:
The hordes of Hate by Love withstood
Inevitably the victory yield.

Bowed down to earth by pain and grief,
Ye falter not in your belief;
Though driven hard by Error's lash,
Yet from your task seek not relief—
Your labors live though kingdoms crash.

The centuries have wheeled and passed
In armies powerful and vast
Across scourged Hellesponts in vain,
If, from beneath their feet downcast,
Your green leaves spring not up again.

Aye, though to each devoted breast
Shall Darkness' spears be clasped to rest,
The breach is made, and all that see,
O'er your dead bodies, loved and blessed,
Shall rush to glorious victory!

SEEKERS OF HAPPINESS

I

ONE thousand, and another, grains of sand
Beneath a human foot, don't understand
The terror of their multitude beyond;
The mocking of the sickly-looking sun;
The hopeless heat that struggles in its bond—
These learn some sweetness when their learn-
ing's done.

II

A robe of gold-embroidered silk that's hung
Upon a rock 'mongst heaving billows flung,
A naked soul thrown blind-fold in the spray
And given leave to swim and clothe itself,
Or tear the bandage that obscures the way
And turn to shore and take the easier pelf.

III

A thought alone upon the city's street,
Where thousands trample with their leaden
feet;
Unsought, unheard, grasped by the hand by
none,
Left standing by a most unworthy crowd;
In truth alone, a cloud-bespattered sun,
That comes and goes, and glistens in its shroud.

IV

The houses and the landmarks I have built
Are empty save the mockery of gilt;
The bulwarks that I reared to hide behind,
To lie in wait behind until the face
That haunts the shadows melts away in wind,
Seem made of cobwebs in a shaky place.

V

A scented veil that floated in the night
Swept o'er my face and staggered me with
 fright;
I strove, I strive, to catch its flimsiness,
But only clutch the empty air instead;
I hold my heart and wait for its caress—
I know it is, and yet 'tis ever fled.

VI

Beginning, Time, and End—O feeble mind!
You cannot grasp what's not by these outlined,
And yet you rear a temple and despair
Because your children 'midst its ruins cry;
You make a curse—it seems a breath of air—
Then curse again because it will not die.

VII

The wise their spokes do make into a wheel ;
The fool makes fire with his short warmth to
 feel ;
The just yet roll the wheel beyond the fire—
The brave fear not the fire, or wheel, or things,
But fasten Chaos underneath Desire :
The wise have birds they keep with clipped
 wings.

VIII

A heart I have not met, a love not known,
A peace I have not felt, a little zone
That's bounded by my sweet, untrammelled
 will,
A music that I never understood,
A fruit and wine and dance that never fill,
A choice to sleep or wake—then were Heaven
 good.

IX

The seal be broken and the scroll unrolled,
The memory all upon his fingers told,
The soul be clear and tranquil as the glass,
No fear-benumbed or cloud-enveloped brain,
The infinite grasped while finite mortals pass—
Then Heaven were good, and other heavens
 vain.

X

O break a heart, and bring cement, and go!
Or smite your mother on the lips a blow—
Then given a rock, high waves, a brazen sky,
To grovel on, to hear, to lift your face:
And see if you rend pardon from on high,
Or lure a hope unto your lonely place!

XI

The care-free urchin with his horseshoe nail
And resined string makes window sashes wail,
And thinks him happier than the happiest.
How dare you cut a painting from its frame!
Or break the statue o'er a hero's breast!
Or fling the manuscript into the flame!

XII

Have you the mountains seen when they appear
To rise from wavering mist? And when they
 rear
A bold and rugged front on fitful feet?
They are no less as stable as of yore.
What if the passing clouds your vision greet?
They try your faith—and you will trust the
 more.

XIII

Perhaps the heavens have unnumbered forms,
Uncouth and dark, that whirl in fearful storms
In unseen orbits round our pitiful sphere;
Perchance a dazzling throng is there with song:
What matters it? We do not know the fear;
Unto our souls does not the threne belong.

XIV

A shackled wrist may drive the dagger home:
You give the knife, and let the error roam—
And all the hands that freedom ever clasped
May pluck the steel and staunch the hole in
vain.
You're given little, and you've littler grasped,
With which to leave your credit without stain.

XV

O fill your time, let not a moment pass
Of which repentant you shall say, alas!
For when the portals open you're betrayed,
And when they close they open nevermore:
And you were gold you could not friends per-
suade
To drop their ease and storm your prison door.

XVI

There is a watchman standing guard before—
More beautiful than she whom you adore—
And with his winning smile he lures you in ;
You find his golden promises are lies ;
You turn again unto your world of sin—
A skeleton guards before that Paradise.

XVII

And will you lift your head out of the grass
To strike the foot that happens there to pass—
With poison make a monster of your God?
O have you thought of your immortal soul?
Where goes it when it leaves this earthly clod?
And shall the wicked have eternal dole?

XVIII

The one-day infant that turns about and dies
Ere light has known the color of its eyes
Has then unsought of it a life for aye?
Where is the soul when consciousness is lost
In sleep, or fainting? Goes it up to cry:
“Begrudge not rest unto the tempest-tossed!”

XIX

And yet, when Time shall reach Eternity,
When all the dead are from their prisons free,
The righteous shall be clothed in shining robes
Of immortality—then, only then?
The mind of man forever probes and probes—
The worms shall eat it ere it probes again.

XX

Then are you good? And would eternal rest?
Your head lies pillowed upon your brother's
 breast
That heaves in pain—eternally he's damned.
O let the sinner die, and be you saint,
And live forever when the door is slammed—
But let the other end his poor complaint.

XXI

Beware to scoff! There is a principle
That underlies the Empty and the Full.
Despair or Hope have never laid it bare.
The feverish heat of life has blurred our sight—
Below the dancing waves we know 'tis there:
Come, drink your wine, the dawn is born of
 night.

XXII

Take from the least and give it to the most,
Array the ant against an army's host,
Repent of good and seek the evil out:
And you may feel the worms crawl in your
 heart,
Or you may hear the heavenly beings shout,
But know the debt is there—a few years apart.

XXIII

Along the streets are mansions where within
Whose empty halls in each there might have
 been
Two golden vases—but there is but one.
And it is made to hold a measure due—
Upon the walls a finger has begun:
“You fill the vase, the mansion is for you.”

XXIV

Ah, well, you have a sieve to dip it up—
The streets are just so long; so deep the cup;
A countless multitude to vie with you—
But they have built the city just so great,
And for the crowds its mansions are but few;
If you can fill the vase don't hesitate.

XXV

O make a fire, and with a net of gold,
Go catch a fish and pity you its cold—
Go get a guide, and catch a stumbling mole,
And let your pity lead it o'er the earth—
You don't return the same amount you stole:
A man at least has peace before his birth.

XXVI

Eat quick your tongue ere that you let it say
The doom of some is consciousness alway
'Midst various tortures for the crime of life!
And dare you make a Moloch of your God?
You do not know the purpose of your strife;
Or who is straight, or crooked, by your rod.

XXVII

Break then the bird's wings, and the antelope's,
Wall strength around, and bind you man with
ropes;
Imprison flesh with chance and circumstance—
You can't prevent the flight of memory;
You cannot break the mind's soul-driven lance;
You can't imprison faith—nor treachery.

XXVIII

A trampling of countless feet; a sullen roar;
The dust of battles dense on every shore;
The crash of matter; and the shriek of pain:
Within the ocean's bosom breaks the heart
Of nations for a little that is vain,
A sounding word, a fool allowed to start.

XXIX

The breath of graves, the smell of reeking
 blood,
The stench of rotting carcasses of mud!
A chariot drawn by fiery horses flies,
And plunges nowhere through the noisome mass;
A man, exultant, leaps aboard and dies.
What took he with him when he came to pass?

XXX

Where Silence molded into mountain sits
And holds the key that opens to the Pits;
Nor ever sound is heard but of the air
That sluggish forces through the hard-breath-
 ing nose:
Sweet Peace is fondled by a mother's care,
And all's at rest that comes or stays or goes.

XXXI

The unmeasured, the unfathomed, the unknown—

The mind is crushed that wished to be alone:
Here Peace that passes understanding's found.
They, all, that tumult love, that quiet seek,
Leaping to death, or grovelling on the ground,
Have end all one—who knows if bright or
bleak?

XXXII

A narrow cup, and eyes a laugh apart,
To drink a health and curse it in the heart;
A skull of blood and lipless mouths thereto,
A soul of crawling worms to voice a toast;
So drink the health again, and curse anew:
For you are seated with a thirsty ghost.

XXXIII

A cool, sweet hand upon your fevered brow,
A soft, low voice that whispers to you, "Now."
O it were happiness to be thus sick!
To hear the sleepy murmurs Nature makes,
To scent the flowers, to hear the insects click—
Then pray for health that from such ill awakes?

XXXIV

O press this quivering beauty to your breast!
For Night's content, and Morning brings unrest.

A cooper makes a cask for each of you,
And you're not happy till you fill it up;
Don't bore a hole to let the water through,
The wine will go the same, nor leave a sup.

XXXV

You stand and dig your heels into the shale,
Before the still and endless sea you quail,
Suppose you see a ripple strike the shore
And break in foam the snaky, twisting brine—
You do not know there fell a meteor,
You did not see the ship below the line.

XXXVI

You know as much of any other plan
That has been made to run these things and
man;
You always see the cause of some effect,
And from this tail-end you must figure out,
And all your pretty schemes of life erect,
And seek your pleasure, and the final route.

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